

NOTES ON KAYU GHARU.

In CRAWFORD'S Dictionary of the Malay Archipelago I find the following:—“AGILA the Eagle-wood of Commerce. Its name in Malay and Javanese is *kalambak* or *kalambah*, but it is also known in these languages by that of *gharu* or *kayu gharu*, gharu-wood, a corruption of the Sanscrit *agahru*.....There can be no doubt but that the perfumed wood is the result of disease in the tree that yields it produced by the thickening of the sap into a gum or resin.”

This “Eagle-wood of Commerce” under its more familiar name *gharu* is one of the rarest and most valuable products of our Malayan jungles, and the following notes may be of interest. They are the result of enquiries amongst the Malays and *Pawangs* in Ulu Muar and Johol and I am indebted to Mr. L. J. CAZALAS for much assistance in obtaining the information contained in them.

The *gharu* tree is a tall forest tree sometimes reaching the size of 15 feet in diameter. The bark is of a silvery gray colour and the foliage close and dense of a dark hue. The Malay name for the tree is “*tabak*” and no other may be used by the *Pawang* when in search of the *kayu gharu*. *Gharu*, the diseased heart-wood of the *tabak*, is found in trees of all sizes even in trees of one foot in diameter, thus shewing that the disease attacks the tree at an early stage.

The *gharu* is found in pockets and may sometimes be discovered by the veins which run to these pockets. In other trees the veins are absent, which renders the process of searching more difficult. The tree is generally cut down and left to rot which exposes the *gharu* in about six months.

“Pockets” are found to contain as much as 104 catties; a single tree has been known to yield 400 catties. *Gharu* is seldom found in the sap-wood, generally in the heart-wood or *tēras*.

Many *tabak* trees do not contain *gharu* at all. To select the right trees is the special province of the *Pawang* or wise

man. The *tabak* trees are under the care of certain *hantu* or wood-spirits and it would be hopeless for the uninitiated to attempt to find *gharu*; even the *Pawang* has to be very careful.

The following is the process as far as I have been able to ascertain it:—

On the outskirts of the forest, the *Pawang* must burn incense, and repeat the following charm or formula:—

“*Homali hamali matilok (mandillah?) serta kalam mandiyat serta teboh. Turun suhaya trima suka turun kadim serta aku kabul kata gharu mustajak kata Allah Berkat la ilaha il'allah. Hei Pūtri Belingkah, Pūtri Berjuntei, Pūtri Menginjanaku meminta isitabak. Ta'boleh di surohkan, ta'boleh lindong kapada aku kalau di suroh di lindong kan biar dūrāka kapada tuhan.*”

There is no “*pantang gharu*” except that the words “*isi*” and “*tabak*” must be used instead of “*tras*” and “*gharu*”.

He then proceeds to search for a likely tree, and upon finding one he again burns incense and repeats the spell as above. The tree having been cut down the next thing is to separate the *gharu* from the sap-wood. The best way is to let the tree rot, but the *Pawang* is often “hard-up” and does not mind wasting some of the *gharu* in his hurry to realize.

The following are said to be the tests for finding *gharu* in a standing tree.

1. The tree is full of knots. (*Berbung kol.*)
2. The bark full of moss and fungus. (*Běrtúmuh běrchandáwan.*)
3. Heart-wood hollow. (*Berlóbang.*)
4. Bark peeling off. (*Bergúgor kulit.*)
5. A clear space underneath. (*Mengelěnggang.*)
6. Stumps jutting out. (*Berchulak.*)
7. Tree tapering. (*Bertirus.*)
8. The falling of the leaves in old trees.

There are great differences in the quality of *gharu*, and great care is taken in classifying them. It requires a skilled man to distinguish between some of the varieties.

The names are as follow :—

1. *Chandan.*
2. *Tandok.*
3. *Menjulong-ulong.*
4. *Sikat.*
5. *Sikat Lampam.*
6. *Bulu Rusa.*
7. *Kemandangan.*
8. *Wangkang.*

The *chandan* (*padu tiada champur*) is oily, black and glistening. It sinks in water.

The *tadak* very closely resembles the *chandan*.

The *menjulong-ulong* may be distinguished from the *chandan* and the *tandok* by its length and small breadth. Splinters, 36 inches long, have been found evidently from veins not pockets.

Sikat (*bertdbun champur kubal dan tēras*) fibrous with slight lustre will just float in water. Black and white streaks.

Sikat Lampam—the same as *sikat*, only white streaks more prominent.

Bulu Rusa will float in water, fibrous, generally of a yellow colour.

Kemandangan floats in water, whitish, fibrous fragments small.

Wangkang floats in water, fibrous blocks whitish in colour.

The *chandan* tree differs from other *gharu* trees in having a maximum diameter of about 1½ feet and very soft sap-wood.

Gharu varies in price between \$200 and \$50 a *pikul* according to the variety. The *chandan* and the *tandok* are the most valuable.

Chinese and Malays burn it in their houses on high days and festivals—the latter generally take a supply with them on the pilgrimage to Mecca. The better varieties are used in the manufacture of aromatic oils.

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